

REMARKS

The Examiner's Action mailed on March 29, 2004, has been received and its contents carefully considered.

In this Amendment, Applicants have prepared a substitute specification, a new Abstract, and amended claims 1-16. Claim 17 has been canceled. Claim 1 is the independent claim. Claims 1-16 remain pending in the application. For at least the following reasons, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance.

The Examiner's Action objected to the disclosure for containing terms which are not clear, concise or exact. In response thereto, the disclosure has been rewritten to correct the matters specifically noted by the Examiner's Action, as well as to correct various informalities noted during the review. It is submitted that the disclosure complies with all official provisions, and it is requested that this objection be withdrawn.

The Examiner's Action has rejected claims 1-17 as being obvious over *Williams et al.* in view of *Gordon et al.* and *Nering et al.* Because claim 17 has been canceled, Applicants will treat this rejection as pertaining to claims 1-16. It is submitted that these claims are *prima facie* patentably distinguishable over the cited combination of references for at least the following reasons.

Applicants' independent claim 1 is directed to a front-opening unified pod auto-loading structure adapted to load a FOUP. Applicants' claimed invention includes, *inter alia*, a machine base, a carrier which includes a detecting pin close by a center thereof for detecting if the FOUP is accurately positioned, and a detector mounted on a back of a backboard of the machine base, and being adapted to detect protrusive wafers in the FOUP. This claim also recites a latch that is disposed below the carrier which includes,

inter alia, a locking plate which is adapted to latch the FOUP on the carrier by being inserted through an elongated opening of the carrier. This claimed invention has the advantages discussed throughout Applicants' specification, and is neither disclosed nor suggested by the cited references.

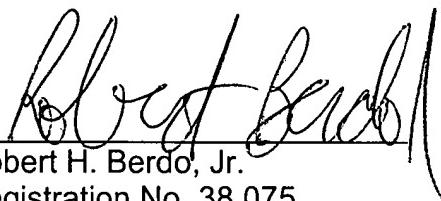
Williams et al. disclose a thermal processor for treating semiconductor articles, and includes a furnace load port 120 which includes a docking plate 122 having pins 116, and a latch 124 which is operable to engage a pod 118 once placed on the plate 122. This reference also discloses providing a door 126 disposed on an arm 132, which includes a pod opener that includes rotary actuators 134 which unlock a door on the pod 118. However, and in contrast to the present invention, this reference does not disclose or otherwise suggest a carrier which includes a detecting pin for detecting if a FOUP is accurately positioned, as recited by claim 1. Moreover, this reference does not disclose or otherwise suggest a detector mounted on a back of a backboard of a machine base which is adapted to detect protrusive wafers in the FOUP, as recited by claim 1. Moreover, this reference does not disclose or otherwise suggest a dual latching arrangement which includes a locking plate as recited in claim 1 in combination with a locking bolt as recited by claim 5. Further, this reference does not disclose or otherwise suggest a carrier having detecting pins for detecting a manufacturing process stage, as recited by dependent claim 7, nor detecting pins adapted for detecting a type of the FOUP, as recited by claim 8. Similarly, neither *Gordan et al.* nor *Nering et al.* overcome these deficiencies of *William et al.* As such, it is submitted that Applicants' independent claim 1, and the claims dependent therefrom, are *prima facie* patentably

distinguishable over the cited combination of references. It is thus requested that these claims be allowed and that this rejection be withdrawn.

It is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Such action and the passing of this case to issue are requested.

Should the Examiner feel that a conference would help to expedite the prosecution of the application, the Examiner is hereby invited to contact the undersigned counsel to arrange for such an interview.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert H. Berdo, Jr.
Registration No. 38,075
RABIN & BERDO, PC
Customer No. 23995
Telephone: 202-371-8976
Facsimile: 202-408-0924

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Date

RHB:crh

AMENDMENT

09/705,733